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ABSTRACT

The Bell High at Harbor Program is a cooperative effort between Bell High School and Los Angeles Harbor College (LAHC) in which, each year, approximately 120 Bell students complete the ninth grade on the LAHC campus. Students participate in a traditional ninth grade curriculum and concurrently enroll in two college courses per semester. The program was initiated in 1986 as a result of space shortages in the Los Angeles Unified School District, although it became clear that the program might help to motivate students to attend college after completing high school. In 1989-90, when the program's first-year participants were in their senior year in high school, a follow-up study was conducted to evaluate the impact of the program on student success and attitudes about school and college. Of the 107 students who participated in the program in 1986, 102 were sent follow-up surveys. These students were volunteers to the program, described as "academically enriched, college preparation"; 96.5% were Hispanic, and the rest were Asian and White. Study findings, based on a 69.6% response rate, included the following: (1) program participants had a retention rate of 92.5%, compared to 71.8% for other Bell students; (2) 69% of the respondents stated that the program had increased their interest in attending college; (3) 84.5% indicated an increased interest in learning following exposure to LAHC faculty; (4) 97.1% stated that they intended to complete a college degree; and (5) among aspects of the program which students liked the most were the "freedom" and the "atmosphere," while negative aspects included the 20-mile bus ride and the inability to participate in campus life. The survey instrument and cover letter are included. (JMC)

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HIGH SCHOOL AT COLLEGE

A Study of the Bell High at Harbor College Program

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The Bell at Harbor Program is a cooperative effort between Bell High School and L.A. Harbor College whereby approximately 120 Bell students complete the ninth grade on the LAHC campus. Students participate in a traditional ninth grade curriculum and concurrently enroll in two college courses each semester. The program began in Fall 1986 with 107 Bell students, 96.5% of Hispanic ethnicity.

STUDY PURPOSE

The study was conducted in 1989-90 when the program's first year participants were in their senior year of high school. The focus of the evaluation was to assess the impact of the program on student success and attitudes about school and college.

STUDY PROCEDURE

Qualitative and quantitative measures were examined. A student survey was conducted, and retention and grade data were compiled.

FINDING HIGHLIGHTS

The Bell at Harbor program had a major impact on high school retention. Bell at Harbor participants had a retention rate of 92.5%, compared to the regular Bell retention rate of 71.8%.

The program participants overwhelmingly approve of the program with 100% of survey respondents indicating satisfaction and 95.8% indicating they would recommend it to their friends.

The program was found to give students a better understanding of college (71.8%) and increased their interest in attending college (69%). Exposure to Harbor College faculty increased interest in learning for most program participants (84.5%).

Students in the program are highly motivated to complete college, with 97.1% indicating a goal of completing a college degree, 70% of which plan to complete a graduate degree.

Aspects of the program which students liked most were the "freedom" and the "atmosphere". Students felt they were given greater responsibility and were treated like adults. They felt they were given more personal attention and that greater interaction between students and staff contributed to increased expectations and motivation.

Negative aspects of the program include the bus ride and longer hours connected with it, and the inability to participate in the campus life at Bell (sports and clubs). The large majority of the participants (85%), however, felt the program benefits far exceeded any disadvantages.

CONCLUSIONS

The major conclusions of the study are that the students strongly favor the program, the program contributes to increased retention, increased interest in learning, and increased interest in attending college.

BACKGROUND

The Los Angeles Unified School District approached L.A. Harbor College in 1986 to seek assistance in overcoming a critical space shortage. They proposed housing two classes of ninth grade Bell High School students on the LAHC campus. The college had little interest in merely "housing" high school students so discussions explored the possibility of integrating the educational offerings of both segments to benefit the students. It was agreed that students would enroll in college classes, taught by college instructors, as part of their high school program.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

The initial class of ninth grade Bell High School students who participated in Fall, 1986 volunteered for the program. Certain students were recommended for the program by Bell staff, but others self selected for participation. There were no predetermined selection criteria to fill the available slots, although the program was described as "academically enriched, college preparation." 96.5% of the students were Hispanic. The remainder were Asian and white.

For Fall 1986, four classes, totaling 107 students enrolled in the Bell at Harbor Program. The classes were housed in designated classrooms at LAHC and taught by high school teachers who were assigned full-time to the Bell at Harbor program. A full-time coordinator from Bell was also assigned to the program and housed at LAHC. Students also enrolled concurrently in two college classes (Health and Physical Education) taught by regular LAHC faculty.

Students were bused each day approximately 20 miles to the campus.

There was an expectation that the program would motivate students to attend college.

The primary change to the Program since 1986 is that the program is now housed in bungalows installed on the LAHC campus.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In September 1989, high school and college staff met to discuss a follow-up study of program participants. It was agreed to examine the first Bell at Harbor class, who at that time were high school seniors. The focus of the study was to assess the impact of the program on student success and student attitudes about school and college. The key questions developed were:

1. Were students in the program more successful in their high school achievements?

2. Were students satisfied with the program?

3. Did the program give students a better understanding of college?

4. Did the program increase students' interest in attending college?

5. Did the program increase students self-concept?

6. Were the inconveniences of the program (i.e. bus ride, separation from friends) worth it to the students?

7. Did the students complete the college classes satisfactorily?

8. Did exposure to Harbor faculty impact the students?

9. As a result of exposure to Harbor College, would students want to enroll as regular college students?

10. Were there any unintended outcomes?

11. Did students want more support services available?

12. Did the Harbor College P.E. classes increase interest in participation in athletic sports?

13. What are students' current educational goals?

PROCEDURE

To address the research questions, a combination of qualitative and quantitative measures were employed. First, a student survey was developed to gather student opinion, attitudes, observation and goals. Also, the Bell at Harbor student retention rate was calculated and grade point averages examined. Student success in their college classes was measured.

The survey was administered to all Fall 1986 Bell at Harbor participants. At the time of the survey, participants were enrolled in 12th grade. Students in A and B tracks were summons to the school auditorium and the survey was administered. Students in C track, which was off schedule at that time, were mailed the survey with return, self-addressed envelopes to Harbor College. Students no longer enrolled at Bell were sent surveys to their homes, if addresses were available, or to the high school where they transferred. Of 102 students surveyed, 71 or 69.6% completed and returned the survey.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Following is a summary of findings, based on the initial research questions.

<u>Student Success in High School Achievements</u>

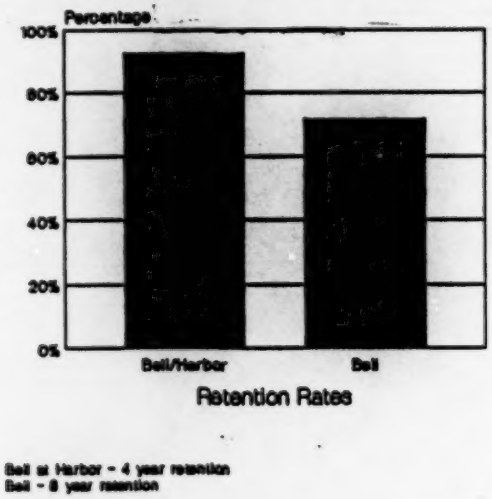
The two measures selected to address this issue were persistence (retention) and academic achievement as measured by high school grade point average and college grade point average.

Retention

Of the 107 student enrolled in the Bell at Harbor program in September 1986, 86 (80.4%) were still enrolled at Bell High School as seniors in Spring 1990. Another 13 students had records of transferring their enrollment to other high schools. The total 4 year retention is 99 of 107 students or 92.5%.

The 3-year retention rate for Bell High School in 87-88 (latest available) was 71.8%. Four year retention rates are not calculated for regular students. Even given an additional year, the Bell at Harbor retention exceeds the regular Bell retention rate by 20.7%.

Table 1. **Retention Comparisons**
Bell at Harbor vs Bell



College Courses

Bell at Harbor students enrolled in the following college courses in 1986-87:

	Course	Title	Units
Fall 1986			
	Health 11	Prin. Health	3.0
	P.E. 228	Body Conditioning	1.0
Spring 1987			
	Dev Com 23	Tech. of Learning	3.0
	PD 4	Career Planning	1.0
	P.E. 229	Body Dynamics	1.0

One class of 55 students was randomly selected and grade point averages for the college courses were calculated. The mean grade point average (GPA) of Bell at Harbor students for all college classes (9 units) was 2.9. No matched comparison group is available.

High School Grade Point Average

An ex post facto control group was selected to examine change in grade point average (G.P.A.) between 8th grade and 12th grade. The control group was selected randomly from 12th grade students who did not participate in the Bell at Harbor Program. The variable "gifted" was matched to eliminate academic advantage of one group over the other. Even so, the 8th grade G.P.A. for the Bell at Harbor group was 3.24 and the control group was 2.69, a margin of .55. Standard deviation for the control group was .7502 and .4797 for the Bell at Harbor group. Average G.P.A of both groups dropped by the 12th grade, with the Bell at Harbor group at 2.83 and the control group at 2.34. The margin between the groups narrowed to .49, with the Bell at Harbor group reflecting a greater decline. Standard deviation for the Bell at Harbor group grew to .5201 but the control group fell to .6217.

Comparisons were also available for 12th grade scores on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS). The average percentile score for Bell at Harbor students was 62 for Reading and 75 for Math. This is significantly higher than the control group which scored an average percentile of 38 for Reading and 51 for Math. The wide difference in basic skill ability does not seem to carry-over proportionately to grade point average.

Student Satisfaction

One hundred percent of surveyed students indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that the program was satisfactory. Of these, 63% strongly agreed that the program was a satisfactory experience.

59.2% strongly agreed that they would recommend the program to friends, 36.6% agreed that they would. 4.2% did not know. None of the surveyed students indicated they would not recommend the program to friends.

Student Understanding of College

71.8% indicated that they felt the program gave them a good understanding of college. 18.3% disagreed and 9.9% did not know.

Student Interest in Attending College

69% of the students agreed that the program increased their interest in college. 21.1% disagreed. 9.9% did not know.

55% of the students indicated that they felt they had a better chance to succeed in college because of their experience at Harbor.

45% indicated that because of the Program they are planning to complete more education than they would have otherwise.

59.1% indicated that the Program increased their interest in staying in high school.

Student Self-Concept

84.5% of the students agreed (33.8% strongly) that the Bell at Harbor program made them feel better about themselves. Only 7% disagreed and 5.6% did not know.

The same percentage (84.5%) felt that their family was happy they were in the program (52.1% strongly), only 2.8% disagreed, while 12.7% did not know.

87.3% agreed that the program had a positive impact on their lives. 1.4% disagreed and 11.3% did not know.

76% of the students indicated that the academic skills they gained in the program helped them to be better students.

View of Inconvenience of the Program

78.9% of the students indicated that the inconvenience of the bus ride was worth it. 15.5% disagreed and 5.6% did not know.

84.5% indicated that the program was worth the separation from their friends at Bell. 5.6% disagreed and 9.9% did not know.

College Course Completion

All 55 students in the sample completed the college courses. The mean grade point average of Bell students in their college classes is 2.9.

Impact of Harbor Faculty on Students

84.5% indicated that exposure to Harbor faculty had a positive impact on their interest in learning. 4.2% disagreed and 9.9% did not know.

Program as Recruiting Agent for Harbor

12.7% indicated that Harbor would be their community college of choice, if transportation was available. 59.1% indicated that it would not and 26.8% did not know.

Unintended Outcomes

Open ended comments on the survey did not reveal unintended outcomes, although responses did give additional insight into students' opinions. One phenomena observed by high school staff is the bond between students that developed during the program and has continued through their senior year. Their closeness and continued identification with the program is demonstrated by the celebration and reunion of the 1986 Bell at Harbor participants held on a Saturday in June, 1990 at a local park.

Need for Additional Support Services

Nursing: 45.1% indicated that they would have liked more Nursing services available. 26.7% disagreed and 28.2% did not know.

Counseling: 64.3% indicated that they would have liked more track counseling services available. 15.7% disagreed and 20% did not know.

Impact of P.E. on Participation in Athletics

69% agreed that their interest in participation in athletic sports increased due to the P.E. classes at Harbor. 25.3% disagreed and 5.6% did not know.

Student Goals

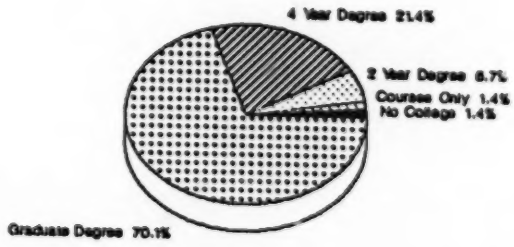
Students' motivation for continuing their education appears to be very high. 97.1% of the students plan to pursue a college degree of some type. A full 70% plan to attain a graduate degree.

To give this finding some perspective, the Los Angeles Unified School District reports that only one-third of Hispanic seniors go on to a California public college. In 1986-1988, 39% of the Bell High seniors had enrolled in a California public college (including two-year) and Bell was ranked as having a "below average enrollment rate". (Enrollment of LAUSD Seniors in California Public Colleges, 1990) There is a significant difference between stating an educational goal and actually enrolling. The real impact of the program in this area will be seen when actual college enrollment for this senior class is reported.

Student goals are as follows:

No plans to go to college	1.4%
Take course only for self interest	1.4%
Complete a two year degree	5.7%
Complete a four year degree	21.4%
Complete a graduate program	70.1%

Table 2. Student Goals
Bell at Harbor



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Students' Open Ended Comments

The survey also asked students for open ended comments on what they liked or disliked about the program. Several clear preferences emerged. Two words surfaced repeatedly: "freedom" and "atmosphere". Students sensed and responded to the greater responsibility that freedom gives, the freedom to walk around campus and use campus facilities such as the student store, gym, and arcade. They felt they were given greater trust and treated like adults. The absence of "bells" was noted. Students were responsible for getting themselves from place to place on time. Their appreciation for the atmosphere included the fact that the campus was "peaceful", "quiet", and "clean". There were no "crowded halls" where students shuffle "elbow to elbow" to the next class. Students felt they were given more personal attention. They appreciated the teachers and the interactions and relationships which developed between students and staff. The positive impact of the college teachers was noted. The students felt they were accepted by the teachers and challenged by them. This was mentioned as a motivating factor by several students. The greater academic challenge was noted and in several cases with appreciation because students felt they were pushed to their potential. Several students mentioned the benefit of learning something of college life.

Several dislikes emerged from students' comments. Clearly, the bus ride and longer hours connected with it, were an annoyance to many students. For the large majority, however, the program benefits far exceeded any disadvantages. A number of students noted that they disliked not being able to participate in various aspects of campus life at Bell such as sports and clubs. Several noted a feeling of general isolation from Bell. Various other dislikes were noted by several students such as: type of food, too much homework, foreign language class and no lockers.

DISCUSSION

The Bell at Harbor Program bears some similarity to the Middle College which has seen success with high school students. Operationally they are very different because there is only a partial integration of the Bell students into the college and the Bell students are not considered "at risk" as are the Middle College students. What they have very much in common is the elements which have been identified as factors for success in the Middle College program. Factors attributed to success of the Middle College students include: freedom of environment, students being treated like adults, identification with the college, teachers as encouragers, supportive staff, and personal attention (Lieberman, 1988).

These factors also exit in the Bell at Harbor program. They are the very elements that students commented on as those they most liked about the program.

Overall, students rated the program very high and highly recommended it. A significant number attributed to the program a better understanding of college, an increased interest in attending college and an increase in their own self concept. A large majority of the students indicated that the academic skills learned in the program

helped them to be better students. This would be a contributing factor which lead to many students increasing their plans to complete more education as a result of the program. For many the program gave them an increased interest in staying in high school. This was confirmed by the high retention rate over the four years of high school. Also as a result of increased academic skills and successful completion of the college courses, a majority of the students felt they had a better chance of success in college. This contributed to their increased interest in school and the large number who indicated goals of college and graduate school. The positive impact of strong group identification has been noted in other studies. This aspect should be explored further to determine what contribution fellow students made to increased retention and success of their peers.

For the majority, the inconveniences of long hours, bus ride, and separation from friends were overcome by the benefits of the program.

The students were able to complete college courses satisfactorily and felt that the college faculty made a positive impact on them. The successful completion of college courses and positive influence of college faculty early in their academic experience apparently served to give students confidence about their ability to succeed in school and college. A large number (69%) felt that the college P.E. classes motivated them to become involved in intramural athletics. Again, the college faculty had a strong influence in students in demonstrating the benefits of sports participation.

The low number (12.7%) who indicated they would want to return to attend Harbor as college students indicates that the program does not provide a strong recruitment strategy for the college. The distance (approximately 40 miles round trip) may be the major inhibiting factor.

Retention of students appears to be a major outcome of the program. The 92.5% retention factor indicates the program plays a major role in motivating students to remain in school. The retention is related to the program's role in increasing their interest in school and motivating them to seek advanced education.

The analysis of grade point average suggests that higher grades may not be a program outcome. The control group fared better than the Bell at Harbor group by not experiencing as great a reduction in G.P.A. Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills score differences between the groups would suggest that knowledge of basic skills in English and Math have only limited direct influence on grades.

The Bell at Harbor student's goal statements give an indication of their strong interest in higher education with 70% indicating they would pursue a graduate degree and another 21.4% pursuing a 4-year degree. This is an unparalleled response to find a minority group with such high educational goals. It would be worthwhile to track these students through college.

CONCLUSIONS

The major conclusions of the study are that the program contributes significantly to greater retention, students experience an increased interest in learning and have an increased interest in going on to complete a college degree. The Program has a strong positive impact on students by giving them greater confidence in academic work which increases their views of their ability to succeed in school and college. Not only did the program encourage student to remain in high school, it caused them to increase their plans for going on and completing a college degree.

Factors which contributed to success of the program include: freedom of the environment, uncrowded atmosphere, being treated like adults, personal attention, high expectations of teachers and staff, interpersonal relations with teachers and staff, and exposure to college curriculum and faculty.

The students strongly favor the program, as do their families, and it contributes to an increased self-concept.

The Bell at Harbor program continues to serve 120 ninth grade students yearly. The program includes success factors which are beneficial to all students, including those at risk. Evidence suggests that the program should be made available to all students and marginal students should be encouraged to enroll in it. At least one of the Bell students reached this conclusion intuitively and made this statement on her survey form: "Maybe students who are not as likely to succeed or are less interested in continuing their education need the Bell at Harbor program to become encouraged".

Future Implications

Retention and motivation to succeed in school are critical needs for many minority students. The Bell at Harbor program has been found to have a profound impact in these areas.

The Los Angeles Unified School District should consider expanding the program to other high school students and other community colleges. At a minimum there should be renewed support and enthusiasm to continue the current program. An alternative approach would be to seek to integrate the identified success factors into high school campuses as much as possible.

For Los Angeles Harbor College, the results of the study should impact the attitudes of some LAHC staff who have viewed the program as an unwelcome nuisance and disruption on the campus. The demonstrated contribution to success of minority students should serve as a point of accomplishment and pride for the college and the high school alike.

REFERENCES

Lieberman, Janet E. "Combining High School and College: LaGuardia's Middle College High School", New Dimensions for Teaching and Learning, no. 24, 1988.

Los Angeles Unified School District, Enrollment of LAUSD Seniors in California Public Colleges 1986-1988, 1990.

Los Angeles Harbor College

BELL AT HARBOR STUDENT SURVEY

Dear Bell at Harbor Graduate:

As a participant in the Bell High School at Harbor College program for ninth grade students, you have completed a unique educational experience. Harbor College and Bell High School are now conducting research on the Bell at Harbor Program and would like to know about your experience. Your responses will be anonymous and used only for this research project. Please circle the number to the right of each question which corresponds to your opinion, according to the following scale:

(1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Don't Know

(4) Agree (5) Strongly Agree

		SD	D	DK	A	SA
1.	For me, the Bell at Harbor (B@H) Program was a satisfactory experience.	-	-	-	36.6	63.4
2.	I would recommend the B@H Program experience to my friends and relatives.	-	-		36.6	59.2
3.	I gained a good understanding of what going to college would be like.	4.2	14.1	9.9	56.3	15.5
4.	My interest in attending college increased because of the B@H Program.	2.9	24.3	17.1	38.6	15.7
5.	My family was happy that I was in the B@H Program.	-	2.8	12.7	32.4	52.1
6.	The program made me feel good about myself.	-	7.1	5.7	51.4	34.3
7.	If transportation was available, Harbor would be my community college of choice.	18.3	40.8	26.8	8.5	4.2
8.	Before the B@H Program, I was uncertain that I could do college work.	18.3	23.9	12.7	31.0	11.3
9.	The B@H Program increased my interest in staying in high school.	9.9	25.4	4.2	39.4	19.7
10.	I would have preferred to spend the 9th grade at Bell High School.	49.3	26.8	15.5	5.6	1.4
11.	I feel the B@H Program will have a positive impact on my life.	-	1.4	11.3	57.7	29.6
12.	The B@H Program was worth being separated from my friends at Bell High School.	-	5.6	9.9	50.7	33.8
13.	The B@H Program was worth the bus ride.	1.4	14.1	5.6	53.5	25.4

		SD	D	DK	A	SA
14.	I would have preferred to continue my high school education at Harbor College.	7.0	29.6	19.7	21.1	21.1
15.	At Harbor College it was easier for me to concentrate on my studies because there were fewer distractions.	1.4	4.2	2.8	49.3	42.3
16.	The B@H Program made me more interested in going to college.	4.2	16.9	9.9	50.7	18.3
17.	I feel I have a better chance to succeed in college because of my experience at Harbor College.	-	14.1	31.0	45.1	9.9
18.	The Harbor College instructors made a positive impact on my interest in learning.	-	4.3	10.0	54.3	31.4
19.	While at Harbor College, I would like to have had more support services, such as					
	a. Nursing	4.2	22.5	28.2	35.2	9.9
	b. Track counseling	4.3	11.4	20.0	41.4	22.9
20.	The academic skills gained in the B@H Program helped me to be a better student.	-	12.7	11.3	57.7	18.3
21.	The B@H P.E. classes increased my skills and interest in participating in an athletic sport.	4.2	21.1	5.6	39.4	29.6
22.	Because of my experience at Harbor, I am planning to complete more education than I would have otherwise.	7.0	35.2	12.7	35.2	9.9

23. My goal for college is: (circle as many as apply)
    a. no plans to go to college
    b. learn skill to get a job but not obtain a college degree
    c. take courses only for self interest
    d. complete a two year degree (AA)
    e. complete a four year degree (BA)
    f. complete a graduate program (MA,MBA,PhD,etc.)

24. When I was at Harbor College, I especially liked:_____
    _____

25. When I was at Harbor College, I especially disliked:_____
    _____

26. Comments:_____
    _____

27. Who decided that you would attend the Bell at Harbor Program?
    a. Bell High staff
    b. I did.
    c. My parents.
    d. Both me and my parents.

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